

# The Book of 1Samuel—15:10-23

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## *“Selective Obedience”—Pt.2*

(10/4/15)

There is a phenomenon that has taken hold in the Christian church in America over the last 25 years or so—where professing Christians in large numbers are approaching the Bible like they would the salad bar at the local restaurant in town.

They are coming to church and hearing sermons and reading the Scriptures with the mentality that they get to pick and choose from God’s Word what they like and reject what they don’t and that that is a perfectly acceptable thing to do.

It’s a phenomenon that some have called *“Salad Bar Spirituality.”* (Comment)

Of course this practice is directly contrary to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Who said that *“man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”*

Now this is not a new thing (although I don’t think I’ve ever seen this mentality as pervasive as it is today in modern culture)—we see it here in the passage we started to look at last week.

## **I. The Command—v.1-3**

The chapter opens up with God giving King Saul a command—

**1 Samuel 15:1-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Samuel also said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt. <sup>3</sup> Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "

If that sounds extremely harsh and completely out of character for a God of love to command—listen to the message from last week.

The incident that God is referring to in verse 2 comes out of the last half of Exodus 17. (Explain)

So that was the command that God gave to Saul and then in verses 7-9 we see how he compromised on what God told him to do—

## **II. The Compromise—v.7-9**

**1 Samuel 15:7-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. <sup>8</sup> He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. <sup>9</sup> But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

Saul didn't obey God completely—he selectively obeyed God.

Not only did he spare King Agag and the choicest of the animals—but he allowed others to remain alive as well.

As we go on a few chapters in 1 Samuel to chapter 27, we find that David also went to war against the Amalekites—so there had to be others that Saul did not kill.

Now Saul and his men had “noble” reasons for not fully obeying what God commanded them to do—at least when it came to the animals:

**“...for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” (v.15)**

I hear this reasoning today quite a bit—*“I know what God has said but certainly this is a much wiser course of action and by me doing it this way things will work out even better!”*

Whenever someone says *“I know what God has commanded—but I feel I need to disobey for good reasons...”* that is always a wrong position to take.

There is absolutely no way to justify disobedience to God no matter how noble your intentions.

As we said last week the real problem with selective obedience is that it puts man in the place of God where he or she is now deciding what actions, practices and behaviors are good and should be allowed to continue, and what are bad and should be done away with.

Look, we don’t get to decide what is good and evil, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behavior—that belongs to God Who alone makes the rules and sets the standard.

All that we get to decide is whether or not we’re going to obey and live by every word that proceeds from His mouth or not.

But know this God has said in His Word (Jeremiah 10) that for all those who have a ‘god complex’—those that think they can play God and make the rules God has said He would judge them someday—

**1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NLT)**

<sup>9</sup> Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.

**Galatians 6:7-8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. <sup>8</sup> For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Now with that as the background let's continue our study by looking at the consequences of Saul's selective obedience—starting with God's pronouncement of condemnation upon Saul's actions.

### **III. The Condemnation—v.10-21**

**1 Samuel 15:10-12 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, <sup>11</sup> "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night. <sup>12</sup> So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and gone down to Gilgal."

Saul couldn't have been more self-deceived.

Here he is setting up a monument for himself—a monument for the sole purpose of honoring himself as a great king, and a great success as a servant of God.

And all the while he is completely oblivious to the fact that in the eyes of God he was a miserable and utter failure as a king and servant.

It never ceases to amaze me how self-deceived people can be when it comes to evaluating their lives honestly as to the true nature of their relationship with God.

I have seen people setting up monuments to themselves, believing themselves to be wonderful, “award winning” Christians because they go to church regularly, read the Bible, serve in ministry in some capacity—

And yet they’re dishonest in their dealings with others or they’re filled with anger and unforgiveness towards a family member or a co-worker that has wronged them.

Or they’re secretly in bondage to drugs, alcohol, or pornography—thinking that the good they do cancels out the bad and that God overall is well pleased with them.

It is truly amazing how clueless and blind some people can be to their true self and how they can feel completely justified in the eyes of God, totally vindicated of any wrong for the things they do—

Like the church accountant that embezzled a hundred-thousand dollars from a well-known church out east and ran off with another man’s wife leaving a note for the pastor that read “*God understands why we had to do this.*”

You’re absolutely right—He does understand.

He understands that you are an incredibly selfish, narcissistic person that has such a high opinion of yourself that you justify everything you do, excusing yourself of any wrong doing no matter how wicked and hurtful your actions are to others.

This was King Saul to a tee—a man who believed that God owed him a pat on the back but instead he was about to get a kick in the pants through what God was about to say to him through the prophet Samuel.

**1 Samuel 15:13 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup> Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."**

Again absolutely clueless—I believe Saul really believed he had done right by God—that he had obeyed what God had told him to do.

**1 Samuel 15:14-15 (NKJV)**

**<sup>14</sup> But Samuel said, "What then *is* this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" <sup>15</sup> And Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."**

Once again, how spiritual we can make our disobedience sound—*"I know I'm marrying an unbeliever but I believe the Lord told me it was okay because I'm going to win him to Jesus—so this is really a good thing!"*

I see this logic with Saul—*"I know we didn't kill all the animals as God commanded—but the people thought it would be better to keep the best animals alive to sacrifice to the Lord! Wasn't that a great idea?! I mean sacrificing animals to God is a good thing right?!"*

**1 Samuel 15:16-19 (NKJV)**

**<sup>16</sup> Then Samuel said to Saul, "Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." And he said to him, "Speak on." <sup>17</sup> So Samuel said, "When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? <sup>18</sup> Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' <sup>19</sup> Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?"**

Next time you're thinking about giving God an excuse for not obeying everything He has said—remember these words.

**1 Samuel 15:20-21 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. <sup>21</sup> But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

Saul is still trying to convince Samuel he hasn't done anything wrong—and if any wrongdoing was done it wasn't his fault—it was everyone else's fault (the people!).

As leader over the nation it was Saul's responsibility to make sure he followed the Lord completely and that the people under him obeyed God completely—but you see Saul was a man-pleaser not a God-pleaser.

**Galatians 1:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

**1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

And so now that God has condemned Saul's actions—He now pronounces the consequence—

## **IV. The Consequence—v.22-23**

**1 Samuel 15:22-23 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> So Samuel said: "Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,

**As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams.<sup>23</sup> For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king."**

The consequence for Saul's compromise is found in the pronouncement of Samuel at the end of verse 23—"Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king."

But before God (through Samuel) gives Saul this pronouncement removing him from his ministry as king of Israel—Samuel gives to Saul a principle that I think is something we all need to understand and remember.

This principle starts out with the positive and then moves from the positive to the negative—from obedience to disobedience.

First of all when it comes to obeying what God has said—some things carry more weight than others.

We see this in Jesus' day where the doctors of the law felt that no one could obey all 613 commandments in the law of God so to make it easier, the experts of the law (lawyers) divided the commandments into what they called "*heavy*" (important) and "*light*" (unimportant).

They taught that if a person focused on the '*heavy commandments*' they didn't need to worry about the '*light*' (trivial) ones—again picking and choosing from the Word of God what they did and didn't have to obey.

The fallacy behind this approach is obvious: You need only break *one law*, heavy or light, to be guilty before God—"For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

When I say that some of the things God has commanded carry more weight than other things—I'm not saying that there are things in God's Word that are unimportant and therefore don't need to be obeyed.

I'm just basically repeating what Jesus said to these same doctors of the law—

**Matthew 23:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

What is Jesus saying?

He is saying that religion (in this case expressed through tithing) is dead and worthless in the eyes of God if it isn't accompanied by obedience to the more important things that He has commanded—and He goes on to name three—justice, mercy and faith.

He ended by saying—“*These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone*”—

Or in other words everything that God has said is important and should be obeyed—but some things are more important than others and should be put on the top of the list.

Reading God's Word is important—something He commands us to do—but it's worthless if we're not applying it into our daily lives by living lives of honesty and integrity—the weightier issues.

Giving to God is a good thing—but if we're not upright in our business dealings then giving to God out of the money we make becomes abhorrent and unacceptable to Him—because honesty and integrity are more important than giving money to God.

With that in mind, back in 1Samuel 15:22 Samuel said to Saul—

**“Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams.”**

Bringing animals to the Tabernacle and later on the Temple to give to God in the form of burnt offerings and sacrifices was something He had commanded in the ceremonial law—the religion of Judaism.

And therefore it was good and right to offer up these sacrifices to God as a form of worship—but only if the people were living in obedience to the weightier commands of God’s laws.

If not God rejected their religious activities as worse than worthless—He saw them as an abomination.

**Isaiah 1:10-17 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: <sup>11</sup> "To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. <sup>12</sup> "When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? <sup>13</sup> Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. <sup>14</sup> Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*. <sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. <sup>16</sup> "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, <sup>17</sup> Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. (Comment)

How deceived religious people can be into thinking that all God wants from them is religion and religious activities—keeping holy days, engaging in religious ceremonies, lighting candles, praying the rosary and yet not obeying the weightier things that God has commanded.

You say, “*What are those weightier things?*”

Well in fact Jesus answered that question when He condensed all 613 commands in the entire law of God into two massive, weighty, all-encompassing commandments—

**Mark 12:30-31 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* This is the first commandment. <sup>31</sup> And the second, like it, is this: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* There is no other commandment greater than these."

Now after pronouncing the virtuousness of obedience—Samuel then went on to pronounce the vileness of disobedience—

**1 Samuel 15:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> **For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...**

**1 Samuel 15:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry..."

**1 Samuel 15:23 (NIV)**

<sup>23</sup> For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry..."

**1 Samuel 15:23 (HCSB)**

<sup>23</sup> For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry...

It is extremely sobering to see God put disobedience to anything He has commanded on the same level with the sins of witchcraft and idolatry.

I think we would all agree that witchcraft and idolatry are some of the more serious sins a person can commit—and yet rebellion and defiance toward anything God has said is just as serious in His eyes.

It kind of shoots to pieces the notion of ‘little sins’ like *little white lies* being harmless.

**Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Look, this isn't about condemning anyone here if you're involved in something that you know is wrong.

None of us are perfect—and if we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is about challenging you not to think that you can sit in the place of God and decide for yourself what you're going to obey and what you don't have to obey out of all that God has said.

This is about challenging you to look at yourself honestly and to stop making excuses for yourself if you're not taking obedience to God seriously in every area of your life.

Let me just say that those who profess to know God and who think they're going to heaven but constantly live in sin, justifying and rationalizing their actions—had better listen carefully to the sobering words of our Lord Jesus Christ—

**Luke 6:46 (NKJV)**

<sup>46</sup> "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?...

**Matthew 7:21 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.